In the claims

1. (Previously Presented) An apparatus that controls access to a job ticket, wherein the job ticket relates to a print job request to be executed by one or more processors coupled to a communications network, the apparatus comprising:

a work flow controller coupled to the communications network, wherein the work flow controller is capable of defining a work flow corresponding to the job request, and capable of defining the job ticket, and wherein the work flow comprises one or more branches; and

a job ticket service that is capable of storing the job ticket and creating a job ticket reference, the job ticket service being further capable of providing the job ticket reference to multiple processors such that the multiple processors use the job ticket reference to access the stored job ticket instead of being provided with a copy of at least a portion of the job ticket, wherein the job ticket comprises a framework specifying the one or more branches, and wherein the job ticket service locks a branch when the branch is accessed by a processor.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein a branch comprises a lock/unlock flag, wherein the lock/unlock flag is set to lock to lock the branch.

3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the lock/unlock flag locks the branch to prevent branch modification, and wherein a second processor may access the locked branch in a read-only mode.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising an access key, wherein the access key is provided to the processor accessing the branch, and wherein the processor provides the access key to the job ticket service to unlock the locked branch.

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the job ticket service comprises a key encryption system, and wherein the access key is encrypted using the key encryption service.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the processor that accesses the branch is authorized access to the branch, and wherein such authorization is stored with the job ticket.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a job store, wherein the job store stores content corresponding to the branch, and wherein when the branch is unlocked, the processor accesses the content.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the lock/unlock flag provides an indication of lock status for the branch.

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the job ticket service comprises a data table listing branches of the workflow, and wherein when the processor access a branch, the job ticket service marks the data table to indicate the branch is unavailable for modification.

10. (Previously Presented) A method for controlling access to a stored job ticket by locking branches of the job ticket, wherein the job ticket relates to a print job to be executed by one or more processors in an electronic network, the method comprising:

identifying a branch of the job ticket;

receiving a branch access request from a processor, the branch access request comprising a job ticket reference, the job ticket reference having been provided to the processor, instead of being provided with a copy of at least a portion of the stored job ticket, for accessing the stored job ticket;

retrieving the stored job ticket using the job ticket reference provided by the processor;

providing the processor with access to the branch; and

locking the branch.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the step of locking the branch comprises setting a lock flag.

12. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the step of locking the branch comprises making a lock entry in a data table.

13. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the step of locking the branch prevents branch modification and allows read-only access to the branch.

14. (Original) The method of claim 10, further comprising providing a key to the processor, wherein the key controls modification access to the branch.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising encrypting the key.

16. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising returning the key to gain access to the branch for modification.

17. (Previously Presented) A method for controlling access to a stored job ticket, wherein a plurality of processors compete for selection to perform tasks related to the job ticket, said method comprising:

defining one or more tasks to complete the job ticket, wherein the job ticket relates to a print job and comprises a node-tree having a plurality of branches, and wherein each branch of the plurality of branches includes one or more defined tasks;

receiving a request from one or more of the plurality of processors to access one or more of the plurality of branches, each said request comprising a job ticket reference, the job ticket reference having been provided to the one or more of the plurality of processors, instead of being provided with a copy of at least a portion of the stored job ticket, for accessing the stored job ticket;

retrieving the stored job ticket using the job ticket reference provided by each of the one or more of the plurality of processors;

determining if a processor is currently accessing one or more of the plurality of branches;

for branches not being accessed, determining if the requesting one or more processors is authorized to access the branches;

for branches for which access is authorized, copying information from the branches to the authorized processors; and

locking the accessed branches.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein a processor accessing a branch modifies the branch information, further comprising: unlocking the branch; and copying the modified branch information to the job ticket.

19. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the step of locking the branch comprises setting a lock flag at the branch.

20. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the step of locking the branch prevents branch information modification and allows read-only access to the locked branch.

21. (Previously Presented) A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for

controlling access to a stored job ticket, the job ticket corresponding to a print job, wherein a plurality of processors compete for selection to perform tasks related to the job ticket, the method steps, comprising:

defining one or more tasks to complete the job ticket, wherein the job ticket comprises a node-tree having a plurality of branches, and wherein each branch of the plurality of branches includes one or more defined tasks;

receiving a request from one or more of the plurality of processors to access one or more of the plurality of branches, each said request comprising a job ticket reference, the job ticket reference having been provided to the one or more of the plurality of processors, instead of being provided with a copy of at least a portion of the stored job ticket, for accessing the stored job ticket;

retrieving the stored job ticket using the job ticket reference provided by each of the one or more of the plurality of processors;

determining if a processor is currently accessing one or more of the plurality of branches;

for branches not being accessed, determining if the requesting one or more processors is authorized to access the branches;

for branches for which access is authorized, copying information from the branches to the authorized processors; and

locking the accessed branches.

22. (Original) The program storage device of claim 21, wherein a processor accessing a branch modifies the branch information, the method steps further comprising: unlocking the branch; and copying the modified branch information to the job ticket.

23. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the job ticket service permits simultaneous access to the stored job ticket to more than one of the multiple processors by use of the job ticket reference.